

Two-thirds of physicians use Web in clinical practice

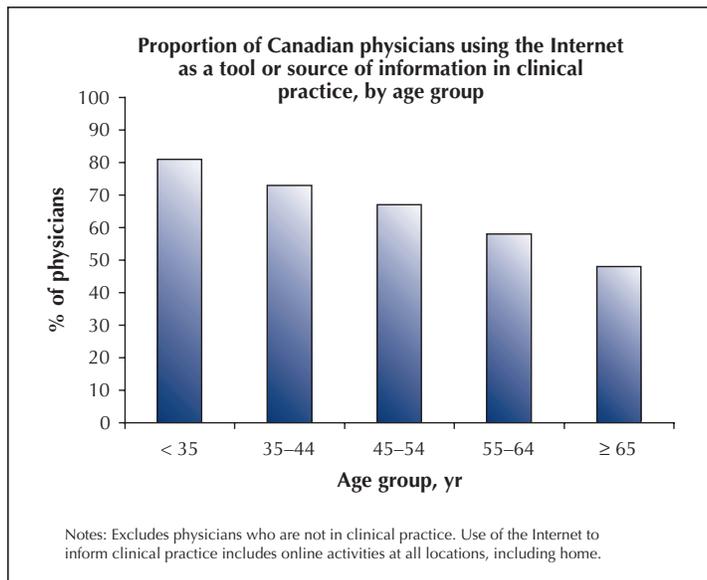
Sixty-six percent of clinically active Canadian physicians use the Internet as a tool or source of information to support treatment or in direct patient care, according to the CMA's 2003 Physician Resource Questionnaire (PRQ). However, almost three-quarters (73%) of physicians who use the Internet do so mainly from home; only 20% conduct most of their online activities at work.

In fact, less than two-thirds of all physicians (62%) have Internet access at work, and 5.8% of those who have such access do not use it. Those who have access at their workplace are highly likely (78%) to use the Internet to support clinical practice, although the majority (62%) still go online from home. Interestingly, almost half (48%) of those without access at work still use the Internet as a tool in their practices.

Specialists are more likely (75%) to have access at their office or clinical practice than GP/FPs (55%) or surgical specialists (57%). Not surprisingly, specialists are also more likely (78%) to use the Internet as a tool in clinical practice than surgical specialists (67%) or GP/FPs (59%).

Overall, 88% of Canadian physicians personally use the Internet, statistically unchanged from the 2002 PRQ findings. Physicians under age 35 are most likely to use it in clinical practice (81%), and those aged 65 and older are the least likely (48%). Future Pulse columns will discuss the manner in which physicians use the Internet in practice, and barriers to and incentives for its use.

The PRQ is Canada's largest annual survey of the professional activities of physicians. The 2003 survey was mailed to a random sample of 7922 doctors, and the response rate was 28.4%. Results at the national level are considered accurate to within $\pm 2.1\%$, 19 times out of 20. — *Shelley Martin*, Senior Analyst, CMA Research, Policy and Planning



HEALTH POLICY

Kirby: “Outrageous” delay in health protection funding

Senator Michael Kirby is challenging the federal government to invest in health protection within the year. “Three studies in 10 years have recommended this, yet nothing has happened. Frankly, it’s outrageous. The time has come to stop studying and start taking action,” Kirby said.

Kirby’s Standing Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology recently assessed the state of public health in Canada and evaluated a report by the national advisory group on SARS, chaired by Dr. David Naylor.

Kirby’s committee strongly supports Naylor’s “comprehensive report — probably the first

of its kind in Canada.” It also recommends a 12-month timetable for implementing the recommendations, including a new independent Canadian public health agency. “This is our way of forcing public accountability,” Kirby told *CMAJ*.

A spokesperson for then-Health Minister Anne McLellan said that although she intends to move forward on this, she would not commit to a year. “There is a lot of work to be done and this will take time,” said Farah Mohamed.

Naylor welcomes the Kirby report and hopes it will give Prime Minister Paul Martin

“additional ammunition and ideas to move ahead rapidly.”

Naylor called for \$700 million per year in new federal spending by 2007. But Kirby said funding should, if possible, come from existing sources.

Kirby also advised against requiring federal-provincial agreement before measures such as a new agency can move forward. “We didn’t want this to get bogged down by federal-provincial interactions. ... [T]here are many actions the federal government can take alone, and we feel very strongly that such action is needed now.”

— *Allison Gandy*, CMAJ